

Alaska DOT&PF TRAAK Program

Project Eligibility Guidance

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the types of projects and amenities that are eligible for funding under the Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska (TRAAK) program as administered by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

Governor Knowles initiated the TRAAK program with its primary goals to: 1) expand and enhance the quality of Alaska's non-motoring transportation facilities; 2) build and maintain Alaska as an international visitor destination; and 3) coordinate with State agencies and cooperate with Federal agencies to develop new and better opportunities for access on public lands. A TRAAK Board provides overall program guidance, with program implementation being performed by the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Community and Economic Development, and Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF).

DOT&PF has established a category of transportation improvements in the Department's Federal-aid spending program. Entitled TRAAK, the category funds projects intended to meet the Governor's initiative. The eligibility of projects is determined by restrictions applied by Federal law and regulations and Department policy.

A key component in determining the appropriateness of a proposed project receiving funding under the Department's TRAAK program is its relationship to surface transportation. Surface transportation means all elements of the intermodal transportation system exclusive of aviation. Generally, the stronger the relationship, the more appropriate the project. The TRAAK program seeks to integrate transportation facilities into the community by providing improvements such as bikeways and fully accessible sidewalks; by providing highway rest stops and viewing areas; by preserving historical properties; and by creating and enhancing landscapes and streetscapes.

TRAAK is funded under the Federal surface transportation program (23 USC 133). 23 USC 133(b) lists fourteen activities that are eligible for funding. Listed activities that typically fall under the TRAAK program are:

- Item 3) Carpool, bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways, sidewalk ADA compliance.
- Item 8) Transportation enhancements (T.E.)

Additional activities funded by the surface transportation program not specifically listed under 23 USC 133 include "landscape development; for the acquisition and development of safety rest areas, scenic overlooks, and scenic lands; for the development of information centers and systems;" (23 CFR 752.11). There is overlap in activities eligible under 23 CFR 752 and transportation enhancements of 23 USC 133.

Attachment 1 presents examples of amenities that are eligible for funding as components of a project eligible under 23 USC 133 and 23 CFR 752.

The TRAAK program is currently funded for ± \$30 million annually. \$6 million is funded with mandatory Federal T.E. allocation, and the remainder is funded under general surface transportation program (STP) funds.

The prioritization and selection of projects is determined through the application of 12 scoring criteria to candidate projects. The criteria address a wide range of potential project benefits, including contributions to health and quality of life, safety, funding contributions from other sources, maintenance arrangements, public support, intrinsic qualities, and the role of the project in surface transportation.

II. Eligible Activities

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Eligible projects include providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities for safe accommodations either through construction of new facilities or improvements to existing facilities. The facilities *must* be transportation-oriented and not solely for recreational purposes. However, if a recreation experience is gained as a result of the bicycle or pedestrian facility, this would not exclude the project from consideration. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should connect community or regional activity centers such as businesses, schools, libraries, neighborhoods, shopping, and recreation areas. Funds can be used to complete gaps on existing corridors, link existing facilities, and otherwise help complete a comprehensive system.

Some isolated locations, such as lighthouses, lack any form of pedestrian access to the site. In this situation, pedestrian access can be provided through the construction of a path that connects to an intermodal transfer point for travelers arriving by watercraft. The intermodal transfer point would typically include a fully-accessible gangway and heavy-duty float secured by piles.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be located within or outside the highway right-of-way, and they can include riding or walking surfaces, appurtenances, and related non-motorized infrastructure.

Sample of Qualifying Activities:

1. New facilities:
 - Separate bicycle paths/shared use pathways.
 - Bicycle/pedestrian grade separations.
 - Bicycle parking facilities.
2. Improvements along existing roadways:
 - Paved shoulders.
 - Bike lanes.
 - Sidewalks (including sidewalks that complete systems identified in a community pedestrian plan).
 - Drainage modifications to accommodate bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
 - Projects intended to bring existing public sidewalks into ADA compliance are eligible.
3. Trailheads (parking, restrooms) supporting recreational trails for the purpose of providing off-highway parking.

Sample of Non-Qualifying Facilities:

1. Bicycle paths/multi-use trails that are not serving as a basic segment of a connected pedestrian or bicycle travel network.

Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Sample of Qualifying Activities:

1. Non-construction safety-related activities.
2. Reasonable costs to provide safety and educational activities, such as bicycle and pedestrian safety training, including the cost of facilitators and classes.
3. Related training materials such as brochures, videotapes, or other training aids.
4. Rent for leased space and limited staff salaries.

Sample of Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Long term salary participation.

Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites. This category promotes the protection of scenic and historic values through acquisition of scenic easements and historical sites. Acquisition of real property should enhance the transportation user's experience of the surface transportation system.

Sample of Qualifying Activities:

1. Use of funds to purchase, donate, transfer, or trade land that possesses significant aesthetic, natural, or visual values.
 - Includes acquisition of any historical or archaeological resource either listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Use of funds for appraisals, surveys, legal, and purchase costs.

Sample of Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Open space preservation projects in and of themselves.

Scenic or historic highway programs (including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities).

Funds may be used for projects that will protect and enhance the scenic, historic, cultural, natural, and archaeological integrity and visitor appreciation of an existing highway and adjacent area.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Development of scenic overlooks. This includes a parking lot and a pedestrian trail as necessary to access a scenic overlook. As a guide, the scenic overlook should be within a quarter mile of the highway. Projects with access exceeding a quarter mile should be included in the Community Transportation Program component of the Department's highway program rather than TRAACK.
2. Aesthetic treatment on retaining walls, bridge rails, guardrails.
3. Restoration of historic highway-related features such as lighting, sidewalks, retaining walls.
4. Installation of interpretive signs.
5. Reforestation of slopes along a scenic/historic highway corridor.
6. Development of corridor management plans required for designation through the Scenic Highways program.

Sample Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Development of campgrounds.

Funding eligibility for the provision of tourist and welcome centers applies to both existing and new centers. The tourist or welcome center does not have to be immediately adjacent to a designated scenic historical byway or a Federal-aid highway. However, the requirement to demonstrate a relationship to surface transportation and evidence of a connection to a scenic or historic site must be established; for example, efforts and materials to direct members of the traveling public to a specific local area site deemed to be of scenic or historic significance. The visitor or welcome center should be publicly owned and open to the public.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Construction of a new facility and/or the restoration of an existing tourist or welcome center facility.
2. Related construction actions necessary to complete the facility, such as interior fixtures and parking areas.
3. Research, design, purchase, and installation of items that support or interpret the scenic or historic highway program or site, including kiosks or brochure racks for interpretive materials or maps.

Sample Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Staffing costs.
2. Operating costs.
3. Maintenance costs.

Landscaping and other scenic beautification. This category includes landscape planning, design and construction projects that enhance the aesthetic and/or environmental qualities of a transportation facility. A common activity within this category is the restoration or creation of downtown centers or streetscapes.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Streetscape projects, including lighting, historic sidewalk paving, benches, planting containers, decorative walls, and walkways.
2. Highway landscaping, landscaping at interchanges, bridge ends, etc., and landscaping as part of other eligible transportation enhancement categories.
3. The reintroduction of native or endangered plants or trees.
4. Artistic work such as statues, murals, and gateway signs.

Sample Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Routine, incidental, or maintenance activities such as grass cutting, tree pruning or removal, erosion control, screen planting.
2. Construction of noise barriers or drainage improvements.
3. Post-construction finish work such as replanting or reseeding.
4. Roadway resurfacing and parking lots.

Historic preservation.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Acquisition, protection, interpretation, relocation, and stabilization of a publicly owned surface transportation-related historic district site, building, structure, landscape, or object included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), or contributing to a National Register Historic District.

Sample Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Acquisition of historical artifact collections.
2. Construction of replicas of historic structures.
3. Actions necessary to eliminate or mitigate the effect of a transportation project on any historic property.

Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals). Historic transportation buildings are buildings or structures associated with the operation, passenger and freight use, construction, or maintenance of any mode of transportation where such building is listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

Structures and facilities include tunnels, bridges, trestles, embankments, rails or other guideways, rolling stock, canal viaducts, tow paths, locks, lighthouses, stations, and other man-made transportation features integrally related to the operation, passenger and freight use, construction, or maintenance of any mode of transportation (aviation excepted).

Rehabilitation means returning the property to a state that makes possible a contemporary use while preserving the significant historic features of that property.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Interior and exterior restoration to the original state.
2. Adaptive reuse for transportation purposes.

Operation means the provision of access and service in a manner related to both the continuation of use consistent with the historic character of the property and open to the general public on a not-for-profit basis. The Commissioner must approve operational funding.

Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails).

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Planning, acquisition, rehabilitation, and development of railway corridors for public uses, including bicycle and pedestrian use.
2. Development and rehabilitation of privately-owned rail corridors open to the public without charge.
 - The railway corridor must be authorized for abandonment or have abandonment proceedings pending before the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Archaeological planning and research.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Research on sites eligible for transportation enhancement funds
2. Experimental projects in archaeological site preservation and interpretation
3. Planning to improve identification, evaluation, and treatment of archaeological sites; and data recovery.

Sample Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Routine excavations.

Projects that deal with a specific historical or archaeological resource must be for a resource that is listed or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or to reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity. Mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff is limited to facilities and programs that minimize pollution from storm water runoff over and above required mitigation or permitting regulations on highway facilities. Projects that demonstrate aesthetic and ecological methods for mitigation and enhance recharge are encouraged.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Retrofitting an existing highway by creating a wetland to filter highway runoff based on the impacts of water pollution from the road.
2. Improving streams and drainage channels through landscaping to promote filtering and improve the overall water quality conditions of receiving channels.

Mitigation to reduce the loss of wildlife while maintaining habitat connectivity is not limited to threatened and endangered species, but includes any wildlife mortality directly caused by vehicles. The determination of need for a wildlife crossing or control project in a specific location should be based on migration patterns, habitat use and distribution, and crossing characteristics of the wildlife through data collection on safety of motorists, habitat fragmentation, and wildlife mortality.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Projects designated as wildlife underpasses or overpasses.
2. Measures at areas identified as crossings for wildlife, which include the necessary fencing and other markings and mitigation techniques associated with movement of wildlife across transportation corridors.
3. Bridge extensions to provide or improve wildlife passage and wildlife habitat connectivity.
4. Monitoring and data collection on habitat fragmentation and vehicle-related wildlife mortality.

Establishment of transportation museums. Transportation museums established using T.E. funds must be related to surface transportation and must meet the following definition of a museum. The facility must: (1) be a legally organized not-for-profit institution or part of a not-for-profit institution or government entity; (2) be essentially educational in nature; (3) have a formally stated mission; (4) have one full-time paid professional staff member who has museum knowledge and experience and is delegated authority and allocated financial resources sufficient to operate the museum effectively; (5) present regularly scheduled programs and exhibits that use and interpret objects for the public according to accepted standards; and (6) have a formal and appropriate program of documentation, care, and use of collections and /or tangible objects.

Sample Qualifying Activities:

1. Building a new facility.
2. Adding a transportation wing to an existing facility.
3. Converting an existing building for use as a transportation museum.
4. Purchasing artifacts necessary for the creation of the facility.

Sample Non-Qualifying Activities:

1. Reconstructing, refurbishing, or rehabilitating existing museums, or portions of museums, that are not for transportation purposes.
2. Operations or maintenance of the facility.
3. Funding displays, segments of buildings, or objects not directly related to surface transportation.

Safety rest areas. Safety rest areas include designated rest areas and safety waysides. Designated rest areas will be limited to National Highway System (NHS) corridors and generally will be placed in accordance with the TRAAK Corridor Assessment. Safety waysides consist of parking facilities that remove existing on-highway parking, such as parking on the highway resulting from people accessing recreational opportunities such as trails or fishing. Campgrounds are not eligible.

Attachment 1

Examples of Eligible Features (Features that may be incorporated into eligible TRAAK projects.)

Access control features

- + Railing
- + Fences
- + Gates
- + Handrailing
- + Landscaping (i.e.: mounds, scrubs, trees, barrier rocks)

Drainage features

- + Bridges
- + Curb and gutter
- + Culverts and underdrains
- + Rock and fabric ditch lining
- + Underdrains
- + Special ditches

Landscaping, erosion control, and site restoration features

- + Barrier rocks and rockery wall
- + Gravel pit and quarry restoration/revegetation
- + Mounds
- + Streambank restoration/revegetation
- + Topsoil and seeding
- + Trees, shrubs, and plants
- + Wetlands enhancement

Water and Wastewater Facilities

- + Drinking water sources (handpump and pressurized water well/holding tank)
- + Restrooms with pressurized water and sewer system
- + Sanitary recreational vehicle dump stations
- + Vaulted toilet

Scenic Viewpoint Features

- + Viewing area (hard surface, decking, or grating) with some or all of the following features:
 - + Interpretive displays
 - + Spotting scopes
 - + Benches

Interpretation Features

- + Interpretive displays with graphic panels interpreting the view, or cultural or natural history
- + Artwork and artifacts to be interpreted by displays
- + Interpretive kiosks (roofed sign or combination of signs under one roof)
- + Interpretive shelters (large kiosk, may include scopes and viewing)

Miscellaneous

- + Benches & other public seating
- + Bicycle racks on transit vehicles or at transit facilities
- + Bulletin and information boards
- + Garbage containers and screens
- + Picnic cooking fixtures (charcoal grill & firepit)
- + Picnic tables
- + Picnic shelter
- + Spotting scopes
- + Boardwalks, gratewalks, decks, ramps, and stairs
- + Caretaker cabin (with/without water, sewer, electricity)
- + Caretaker RV site (with/without water, sewer, electricity)
- + Pedestrian/Bicycle bridge
- + Generator system (electric power supply for facility not on power grid)
- + Pavement and striping
- + Retaining wall (wood, concrete, or rockery wall)
- + Standard signs (regulatory, warning, guide, recreational/cultural interest area, bicycle, and pathway)
- + Traffic counters
- + Entrance sign with park facility name

Examples of Noneligible Features

- + Fee payment stations/entrance booths
- + Replica structures
- + Fishing decks and fish cleaning stations
- + Overnight tent or RV camping spaces; individual parking pads
- + Boat launch ramps